

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

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FM AMEMBASSY BLANTYRE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6804

INFO AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L BLANTYRE 152

CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, RH, UK, MI

SUBJ: BISHOP MUZOREWA'S ABORTIVE VISIT TO MALAWI

REF: BLANTYRE 129

1. BRITISH HIGH COMMISSIONER AND I DISCUSSED JANUARY 31
PRESIDENT BANDA'S BAN ON HOLDING UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
CONFERENCE IN MALAWI AND SUBSEQUENT ABRUPT DEPARTURE OF BISHOP
MUZOREWA. BRITISH HIGH COMMISSION UNAWARE OF CONFERENCE OR
BISHOP MUZOREWA'S VISIT UNTIL JANUARY 26. WE NOTED RHODESIA
REGIME STATEMENT AFTER MATTER BROKE IN PRESS TO EFFECT
IT HAD NO OBJECTION TO MEETING BETWEEN BISHOP AND BRITISH
FONSEC; SIJ ALEC'S RESPONSE TO PRESS QUESTIONS THAT NO
ARRANGEMENTS MADE FOR MEETING BUT HE WOULD TRY TO FIND TIME
IF REQUESTED; BISHOP MUZOREWA'S STATEMENT AFTER RETURN TO
SALISBURY THAT HE REGRETTED ANY EMBARRASSMENT HIS VISIT
MAY HAVE CAUSED MALAWI GOVERNMENT.

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2. WE CONJECTURE THAT UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OFFICIAL

RESPONSIBLE FOR ARRANGEMENTS FOR CONFERENCE MAY HAVE FAILED TO PIN DOWN OFFICIALLY AND SPECIFICALLY PERMISSION FROM GOM (I.E., PRESIDENT BANDA). POSSIBLY BUT DOUBTFULLY MINISTER OF STATE MUWALO DROPPED THE BALL. IN ANY CASE PRESIDENT BANDA APPARENTLY NOT FOREWARNED OF CONFERENCE AND BECAME ANNOYED WHEN METHODIST BISHOPS STARTED TO ARRIVE IN BLANTYRE. IRRITATION TURNED INTO "EXPLOSION" WHEN BISHOP MUZOREWA TURNED UP UNANNOUNCED. PRESIDENT MAY HAVE CONSTRUED BISHOP'S FAILURE TO SEND HIM PERSONAL WORD OF HIS TRIP AS A SLIGHT, ESPECIALLY IN LIGHT OF HIS INVITATION TO BISHOP TO ATTEND MALAWI CONGRASS PARTY CONFERENCE LAST SEPTEMBER (BLANTYRE 1070) WHICH WAS MADE IMPOSSIBLE BY SMITH'S REFUSAL TO GRANT PASSPORT. APPREHENSION OVER REPERCUSSIONS FROM ANY MEETING ON MALAWI SOIL BETWEEN BRITISH FONSEC AND BISHOP MAY HAVE BEEN FACTOR BUT SUBORDINATE TO PRESIDENT BANDA'S PIQUE AT LACK OF FOREKNOWLEDGE BISHOP'S VISIT AND OPPORTUNITY PLAY ROLE IN FACILITATING ANY SUCH MEETING.

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